

May 2009

On The Inside:

- Evidence for the “Broken Windows” theory.
- The 2009 Bike to Work Challenge!
- Auto “malls” and the economic meltdown.
- The Consistency Doctrine.
- Digging for public data.

TrendLines

SSCRPC — Advising, Planning, Evaluating, Leading

THE LEAD: MacArthur Blvd. Redevelopment Grant Announced

Thanks to the efforts of Congressman John Shimkus, Springfield’s MacArthur Blvd. may see improvements in its future due to a \$95,000 US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) grant to the Planning Commission (SSCRPC). The funding will allow the SSCRPC to engage a consultant to prepare a redevelopment plan for the MacArthur Blvd. corridor.

Residents and businesses in the area have been concerned about deterioration along the corridor from South Grand Ave. to Wabash for a number of years. The MacArthur Blvd. Business Association (MBBA), County Board member Jennifer Dillman, and Springfield Aldermen Debbie Cimarossa and Mark Mahoney have all been championing local improvements. What has largely been missing is a plan to give public and private efforts to redevelop the corridor some focus.

At an April 30th meeting of the MBBA where the grant was formally announced, Norm Sims, the Commission’s Executive Director, said that the SSCRPC had a very ambitious agenda for the study and expected that it would include four tasks:

- Task I: Conduct data collection for an inventory of the area. This will include identifying land use and status of the structures in the area, site-assembly issues, and infrastructure issues.
- Task II: Conduct a strategic analysis of the corridor. This would include both a market and development analysis to determine what development, where, could leverage the most future, beneficial, development.
- Task III: Provide a design and identity analysis to



identify ways that the corridor could develop a unique, marketable identity.

- Task IV: Conduct a cost and implementation analysis that will result in an improvement implementation plan.

While the study will look at the corridor from South Grand to the new I-72 interchange, the primary focus will be on the South Grand to Wabash segment.

The letter of grant award has not been received from HUD, but the Commission hopes that work can begin this summer. It is expected that it will take 6-8 months to complete the project.

THE SECOND STORY: County Floodprone Property Acquisition Projects Selected for FEMA “Best Practice” Portfolio.

The approach taken by Sangamon County to mitigate flood damage by acquiring floodprone properties was selected for inclusion in a portfolio of best practices by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The listing was related to three floodprone property acquisitions completed by the

County that involved buyouts that were voluntary on the part of the landowners. Seventy-five percent of the funding for the buyouts was provided through the federal Hazard Mitigation Grant Program, while the remaining 25% was provided by the Illinois Department of Natu-

ral Resources. Some of the properties acquired were converted into two new County parks: South Fork Nature Reserve and Carver-Yocum Homestead Park.

For more information, contact Linda Wheeland at the Planning Commission.



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RESEARCH REPORT: Scientific Evidence for "Broken Windows" Theory

Championed by New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani in the 1980's, the "broken windows" theory has become a major component in some city planning. The theory encompasses the notion that an unkempt, disorderly environment breeds crime, so one approach to reducing crime is for communities to take an aggressive, "zero tolerance" approach to everything from poor building maintenance to cleaning up graffiti.

While a number of cities have adopted this approach, it remains controversial because, as Zach Patton of *Governing.com* reports, it's "been difficult to separate the effects of cleaning up a building

from a host of other factors that may contribute to crime in a particular area."

But Patton notes that a group of Dutch researchers conducted a series of experiments designed to test the broken windows approach, finding — among other things — that they could in fact *double* the number of people prepared to commit a crime by manipulating the orderliness of an area!

For example, in one study the researchers left an envelope with a 5 Euro (\$6) note inside (that was visible through the address window) sticking out of a post

box. If the post box was clean and did not have rubbish around it, 13% of those passing by took the envelope instead of leaving it or pushing it into the post box. However, if the post box was covered with graffiti, 27% of those passing by took the envelope. Even if the post box had no graffiti, but the area around it was littered with paper, orange peels, cigarette butts and empty cans, 25% of those passing by still took the envelope!

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Commission Offers Challenge for Bike to Work Day!

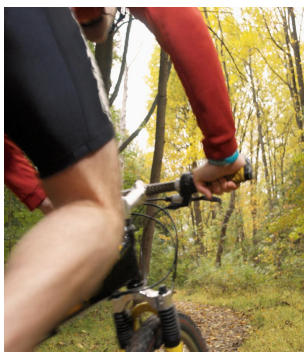
Looking for ways to save money, the environment, and improve your health? The SSCRPC has put out a challenge to employers in Sangamon County to encourage friends, family, and fellow employees to leave their cars at home on Friday, May 15, 2009. It is National Bike to Work Day and the Planning Commission, along with several sponsors, is promoting it as "Curb Your Car on Bike to Work Day". Although not everyone has access to a bicycle, people will be encouraged to bike, walk, run or take the bus to work as healthy alternatives to driving a car.

The challenge is open to any business, agency, organization, school or any other employer in Sangamon County. Team leaders must be designated to organize and register the participating business or organization. Certificates will be awarded to all that participate, and a travelling trophy will be awarded to the business with the highest percentage rate of employees curbing their car on May 15. There are three categories, based on total number of employees at each business. Log-on to www.sscrpc.com for registration and more details. The website also offers bicycle maps, safety tips,

and other helpful hints.

The SSCRPC wants to thank St. John's Hospital's Prairie Heart Institute and AthletiCare for the design and printing of posters to promote this year's event. Other sponsors include Café Moxo, Downtown Springfield Inc., Grab-A-Java, Springfield Bicycle Club, Springfield Mass Transit District, Springfield Park District, and the Springfield Road Runners Club.

Join your community and hop on your bike, the bus, or the sidewalk and Curb Your Car for one day! It's healthy, it's economical, and it's environmentally friendly!



TREND WATCH: The “Auto Mall” Consequences of Economic Meltdown

While much of the public focus on the “market meltdown” has been on the economic impact, less attention is being given to the municipal planning problems that significant changes in the American economy might create. One of those is suggested in the March 2009 issue of *Governing Magazine* (pp. 24-25), where William Fulton addresses what he calls the “Dying Auto Mall”. Fulton notes that over the past 20

years local government revenues became intertwined with car sales, and that municipalities have encouraged the development of “auto malls” in their jurisdictions as a way to hold on to more tax revenue. But recently, as auto sales declined, municipal revenues took a hit.

But a related development has a planning focus that is mostly missed in Fulton’s report. As auto makers merge, shed makes and

reduce the number of dealerships, what is to be done with the expansive auto lots that will no longer be in use? This problem may be compounded in the future as the internet becomes a marketplace for both new and used cars.

Planners and local economic development professionals may be faced with a new, and troubling, economic trend and redevelopment problem.



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LEGAL WATCH: The “Consistency Doctrine”

As communities develop and update their comprehensive plans, they need to keep in mind the role that the comprehensive plan plays in the regulation of development. *Zoning Practice* (August 2008) discusses the disconnections that often occur between plans and zoning, and suggests that communities put teeth into their plans by adopting the “consistency doctrine”. This they define as the “logical connection or relationship between comprehensive plans and the regulatory tools designed to implement those plans.”

They suggest that municipalities

think of the comprehensive plan as the constitution for the community, and that zoning, subdivision regulations, capital improvements, and the like, be thought of as tools for implementing the plan. This is not unimportant because failing to successfully implement the comprehensive plan can have significant legal and operational consequences.

The definitions of “consistency” in the *Planner’s Dictionary* (PAS Report # 521/522) can provide some guidance as to how one might determine consistency:

- All regulations and funding

decisions that are used to implement the comprehensive plan are consistent with the recommendations and policies of the plan;

- Decisions are free from variation or contradiction. Programs in the comprehensive plan are consistent, not contradictory or preferential;
- Standards and criteria established in the comprehensive plan are met or exceeded.

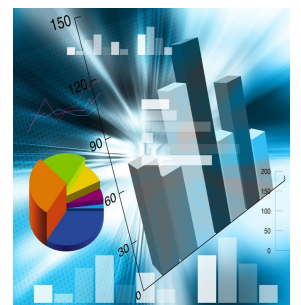
Inconsistencies between plan and zoning are most often the greatest challenge for local decision makers.

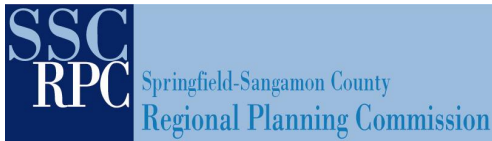
PLANNING TOOL KIT: Digging for Public Data

As anyone who has ever searched through the various sources of public data knows, finding the particular item you are looking for can be a complicated and frustrating task. To assist with this, Google has launched a new search tool designed to help.

The tool, called *Google Public Data*, is intended to make it easier to find numerical data from federal, state and local data sources. The company plans to initially make U.S. population and unemployment data available, allowing users to ask questions such as “What is the current unemployment rate

for Sangamon County, Illinois?, and get the data as well as a graph or chart displaying it. The Google product also allows the user to superimpose other, related public data on the same graph or chart. Some data is already available.





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Upcoming Events:

- **The Sangamon County Historic Preservation Commission will meet in Room 212 of the County Building at 4:00PM on the first Wednesday of every month unless otherwise posted.**
- **The Springfield-Sangamon County Regional Planning Commission meets in the Sangamon County Board Chamber at 9:30 AM on the third Wednesday of each month unless otherwise posted.**
- **The Springfield Area Transportation Study Technical Committee meets in Room 212 of the County Building at 8:30 AM on the first Thursday of each month, with the Policy Committee meeting at noon on the following Thursday, unless otherwise posted.**
- **Curb Your Car and Bike to Work Day, May 15, 2009.**
- **The Planning Commission's offices will be closed May 25 for Memorial Day, and July 3, in observation of Independence Day.**

About the Springfield-Sangamon County Regional Planning Commission



The Springfield-Sangamon County Regional Planning Commission (SSCRPC) is the joint planning body for the City of Springfield and Sangamon County. Along with this ongoing responsibility, the Commission works with many other municipalities, public agencies, and public-private entities throughout the region to promote orderly growth and development.

To achieve this end, the SSCRPC conducts numerous research studies, analytic reviews and planning projects each year. It also acts in regional capacities, for example serving as the Metropolitan Planning Organization for

transportation planning.

The Commission that oversees this work is made up of 17 members including representatives from the Sangamon County Board, Springfield City Council, special units of government, and six appointed citizens from the city and county. The Commission's Executive Director is appointed by the Executive Board of the Commission and confirmed by the Sangamon County board, serves as County Plats Officer, and also oversees the County's Department of Zoning and Building Safety.

Through the work of its profes-

sional staff, the Commission provides overall planning services related to land use, housing, recreation, transportation, economics, environment, and special projects.

The agency prepares area-wide planning documents and assists the county, cities, and villages, as well as special districts, with planning activities. The staff reviews all proposed subdivisions and makes recommendations on all Springfield and County zoning and variance requests. The agency also serves as the Floodplain Administrator, Census coordinator, and local A-95 review clearinghouse.